



Yvonne Caamal Canul received the Michigan Education Association David Mc Mahon award, last Friday, April 28, 2006. This prestigious award was named after former MEA president David Mc Mahon and honors educators who have distinguished themselves for their moral and ethic leadership in the field of human and civil rights. Previous award winners include: Helen Milliken, wife of former Governor William Milliken; David Hollister, former Director of Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth and Lansing Mayor; Father William Cunningham, Founder of Focus Hope; Nanette Reynolds, former Director of the Michigan

Department of Civil Rights and others.

Yvonne attended school in rural America, Washington, DC, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile. In her remarks, Yvonne said, "When you grow up in places that are new and unfamiliar, it can be a marginalizing experience but it also teaches you how to see and value things differently than they might appear. It also gives you a perspective of neutrality with regards to your own racial and ethnic identity. In fact, I found being blind about nationality and political boundaries to be liberating." In referencing her experience as a teacher, she commented, "I learned through teaching that being blind to social-economic stratification is the first step in understanding and respecting the power of the individual."

Yvonne has a long history of outstanding leadership in human rights. She has worked diligently and passionately to improve and enhance the school environment to enable the success of students from all backgrounds. She was a bilingual elementary and middle school teacher, as well as high school teacher for the Lansing School District. While at Lansing, Yvonne also served as the Director of Bilingual and Migrant Programs, high school assistant principal, founder and principal of The Center for Cultural Language and Communication Arts (CLCCA) Lansing's first focus school, and Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Professional Development.

As coordinator of Michigan Department of Education's Partnership for Success program, Yvonne developed an intensive technical assistance program and coordinated a training cadre of school improvement coaches called the ABCS Coaches Alliance for Building Capacity to support high priority schools.

A presenter at numerous local, state and national conferences, she was a featured presenter at the MEA Unity Conference focusing on closing achievement gaps of minority students. Yvonne currently is the Director of the Office of School Improvement which includes support programs such as bilingual and migrant education, regional support for schools, K-12 curriculum, Public School Academies and department school improvement efforts.

Yvonne has received the MEA Irma Ramos Bilingual Educator of the Year Award in 1986 and the Milken Family Foundation's National Educator Award in 1995.